

Prince George's Chapel  
Dagsboro  
Sussex County  
Delaware

HABS No. Del-158

HABS  
DEL  
3-DAG  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## PRINCE GEORGE'S CHAPEL

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Location: Dagsboro, Sussex County, Delaware

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This small chapel, built in 1757,  
has an unpainted, wooden interior  
characterized by simple detailing,  
with an unusual compass ceiling.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Prince George's Chapel, just outside of Dagsborough, had its beginning as a chapel-of-ease for St. Martin's Church at Snow Hill, in Worcester County, Maryland. There is no record of the date at which it was built, but Parson Ross's Journal entries show conclusively that it was standing at the time of his visit in 1717.

This first building was replaced about 1757 by the structure we know today. General Dagworthy was a benefactor and was buried beneath the chancel.

The exterior of Prince George's Chapel is not impressive in its modern coating of shingles. However, this decent but uninspired modern coating protects an interior of great beauty that bears eloquent witness to the skill and sound judgement of the mid-eighteenth-century master-builders.

The chancel has been somewhat modernized, and adorned with pointed-top windows filled with coloured glass, and a section of the south gallery has been removed. Otherwise the interior is unspoiled and intact as the builders left it more than two hundred years ago.

The most striking feature is the graceful barrel vault that spans the nave. It is fashioned of heart-pine planks and springs from the tops of the sturdy pine columns

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that support the galleries above the aisles. The old box-pews in the nave have been replaced by benches of a later date, but the panelled box-pews in the aisles have not been disturbed. All the paneling details are simple but admirably wrought.

Not a drop of paint has touched the old wood anywhere, except window-frames and muntins. In more than two centuries the heart-pine has reached a rich depth of hue that defies accurate definition.

When Prince George's Chapel was built, wood was the only available building material in Sussex. It is illuminating to see how adroitly the eighteenth-century builders translated the masonry traditions of English ecclesiastical precedent into convincing expression in wood. They apparently had in mind some of Wren's London churches.

Prepared by Harold Donaldson Eberlein  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
June 1960

Addendum to:  
Prince George's Chapel  
Route 26  
Dagsboro  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106